

REMARKS

The present application stands finally rejected, as set forth in the Office Action of September 19, 2005. On October 25, 2005, Applicant filed a Notice of Appeal, and on December 14, 2005 a Notice of Panel Decision was issued approving the application to proceed to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences, and further requiring the filing of an appeal brief. However, the Applicant has now chosen instead to file this Request for Continued Examination, thereby automatically withdrawing the application from appeal and reopening prosecution of the application before the Examiner under 37 CFR 1.114(d).

In conjunction with this RCE, the Applicant also presents the amendments shown above and requests consideration of the following remarks.

With the present amendments, Applicant has canceled some of the previously-pending claims in order to focus on features more clearly not disclosed by the prior art. All of the remaining, previously-presented claims include limitations neither taught nor suggested by Narawa or any other prior art. In this regard, and with particular regard to Claims 50 and 73, it is respectfully asserted that Narawa does not, in fact, disclose a lengthwise fold applied to a diaper that is in its nominal configuration. The only folds applied to any nominally-configured diaper in Narawa are in the crosswise or transverse direction.

Applicant has also amended the present application to include two new independent claims. In new Claims 80 and 86, Applicant has included limitations particularly drawn to a feature of the inventive vacuum-packed diaper, described hereinafter, that has not heretofore been specifically claimed. More particularly, Claims 80 and 86 each recite the novel and non-obvious feature that a nominally-configured diaper may be folded or rolled over or under itself, thereby reducing the width and/or the length of the diaper, and then vacuum-packed such that the final thickness of the compressed (vacuum-packed) diaper is approximately the same as the thickness of the nominally-configured diaper (i.e., before the nominally-configured diaper was folded/rolled and vacuum-packed), thus resulting in a more convenient and compact size overall.

Support for this novel feature may be found, for example, in paragraphs 0059-0061 of the specification of the present application, where it is first noted that a diaper may be folded to reduce its length, width or both but at the same time increasing its thickness. It is further noted, however, that a reduction in the thickness may then be achieved through vacuum-packing the

diaper. What was not previously recognized, however, was that through this process, the resulting thickness of the folded, vacuum-packed diaper could be made to be approximately equal to the thickness of the unfolded, non-vacuum-packed diaper. In this way, the overall width and length of the diaper can thus be substantially reduced, but as established by the inventor's experimentation, the thickness may be maintained substantially the same. For example, the inventor discovered that a conventional size 6 diaper could be reduced in size from a nominal size of approximately nine inches long by four and one-half inches wide to a reduced size of approximately three and one-half inches long by two and one-quarter inches wide, all while maintaining a height of approximately one inch.

In this regard, it should be noted first that the referenced discovery and much of the description refer to a "nominal" diaper, which is defined in paragraph 0051 to be a diaper in its "normal, post manufacturing state in which it is ready to be unfolded and worn," as shown in FIG. 1A, but that the principles of this inventive feature apply to diaper in any initial configuration--i.e., whatever the initial configuration, folding the diaper and vacuum-packing the folded diaper may be controlled to produce a final thickness that is approximately the same as the initial thickness.

All independent claims are thus believed to be in condition for allowance. Dependent Claims 52, 62-64, 79, 81-85 and 87-91 are likewise considered to be in condition for allowance as being dependent on an allowable independent claim and, separately, on their own respective limitations recited therein.

Respectfully submitted,
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